

Message Text

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15

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-04 FRB-01

INR-05 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-06 SP-02

CIEP-01 LAB-01 SIL-01 OMB-01 NSC-05 SS-15 STR-01

CEA-01 L-01 H-01 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 DRC-01

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, HK

SUBJECT: GOVERNOR'S SPEECH--LABOR SECTION

REF: HK 11431

SUMMARY: GOVERNOR PROPOSED MODEST IMPROVEMENTS IN LABOR LEGISLATION. THESE SHOULD NOT AFFECT WAGE COSTS TO ANY GREAT DEGREE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN HIS ANNUAL SPEECH TO LEGCO (SEE REFTTEL) THE GOVERNOR DISCUSSED THE GENERAL APPROACH OF THE HKG TO LABOR LEGISLATION. HE SAID THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE HAD BEEN EXPRESSLY DESIGNED TO BE FLESHED OUT OVER TIME UNTIL IT SERVES AS A COMPREHENSIVE LABOR CODE. IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE PRINCIPAL CHANGES HAVE INCLUDED THE EXTENSION OF PAID HOLIDAYS AND SICK LEAVE, CONTROLS ON EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES TO PREVENT EXPLOITATION, PROTECTION FOR TRADE UNION MEMBERS, AND MANDATORY SEVERANCE PAY.

2. IN THE COMING SESSION OF LEGCO, THE GOVERNMENT WILL

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INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO REDUCE THE MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE

OVERTIME FOR WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM 300 TO 250 HOURS P.A. WITH A FURTHER REDUCTION TO 200 HOURS IN 1976. A NEW LABOR RELATIONS BILL WILL ALSO BE INTRODUCED TO ESTABLISH PROCEDURES FOR USE WHEN CONCILIATION HAS FAILED. HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT THE BILL WILL NOT PROVIDE FOR COMPULSORY SETTLEMENTS. NEW SAFETY REGULATIONS WILL BE INTRODUCED TO COVER CARGO HANDLING AND SAFETY DEVICES ON MACHINERY. THE WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ORDINANCE WILL BE OVERHAULED WITH ATTENTION TO OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES, PARTICULARLY SILICOSIS. INDUSTRIAL TRAINING WILL RECEIVE A BOOST AND MORE STAFF WILL BE ADDED TO THE TRAINING DIVISION OF THE LABOR DEPARTMENT.

3. COMMENT: THIS PROGRAM APPEARS TO BE IN THE BEST TRADITION OF THE HKG'S BENIGN NEGLECT OF LABOR STANDARDS. EMPLOYERS WILL INEVITABLY GROAN ABOUT EXCESSIVE GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE BUT WILL FIND THAT THE COSTS ARE RELATIVELY SMALL. PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT AT THIS SESSION OF LEGCO WAS THE SWEARING IN OF THE LABOR COMMISSIONER AS ONE OF THE GOVERNMENT MEMBERS TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THIS IS THE FIRST TIME A LABOR COMMISSIONER HAS BEEN ASKED TO SIT IN LEGCO AND MAY INDICATE MORE HKG INTEREST IN LABOR PROBLEMS.
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